1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

533 that which arouses the more active emotions, the men all sing in a kind of high-pitched voice that, though not actually falsetto, almost has the effect of being so, and that, heard individually, would sound strained. It is, however, not so in fact, since the natives are able to keep it up all night. However it is produced—and I entirely failed to imitate it myself —it has the effect that the singing rings out through the forest surrounding the dancing-ground in a way that ordinary deep-voiced singing (of which the natives are also capable) does not, a fact apparently due to the increase in the number of harmonics that this method of voice-production brings forth.

This alone makes it impossible to reproduce these songs in anything like their original vigour. Another fact is that, on certain occasions, the women join in a kind of high descant, their incredibly high-pitched voices stabbing the air with harmonies that leap up and down the upper octaves in a bewildering manner, producing an effect that I can only describe metaphorically as resembling tongues of brightly coloured light, or, if we retain the sea-metaphor used for the gong-rhythms which accompany the singing, clear fountains of spray.

It is with the greatest regret that I am unable to reproduce any of this music at all adequately. Though I was not able to take any of the solo parts, owing to the high pitch of the voice that I could not achieve with sufficient force for more than a few notes at a time without becoming hoarse, I nevertheless frequently danced and sang in chorus, and it was from doing this, and from the habit I made of gathering young men in my hut to sing at night, when I could check over mistakes, that I was able to note down a number of songs. This was, indeed, my most enjoyable method of relaxation after the day's work. The songs thus noted were again gone over with a specially musical informant, and, though fragmentary and allowing for the impossibility of exact reproduction in ordinary musical notation, I can guarantee them accurate so far as they go. These evening concerts were held on Atchin, and it is from that island that most of the songs I noted come. These will appear in later volumes. With the practice I there had, however, I was able to note songs from informants elsewhere, and the Vao examples given in this book are one of the results. At the same time, I took a number of phonograph records, both of the songs and of the gong-rhythms, some of which have now been transferred on to gramophone plates, which await detailed study by experts.[1]

533 176 Every native can sing, and most natives have from time to time composed their own songs. There are, nevertheless, certain individuals

[1] If any reader skilled in comparative music and the scientific working out of such material would care to undertake this work I should be glad to hear from him.

For transcriptions of songs noted down in the field, see Index under "Songs," and particularly the technical footnote to Song 1, p. 284.

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
OOI2 Malekula OOI2

who excel in this, and who compose songs that sometimes come to them in dreams or else consciously during the day. This gift, like everything else in the Small Islands, is commercialised. Songs are composed on request and duly charged for, and, if of a ritual nature, will thenceforth enjoy the same "copyright" protection as is afforded to all tangible and intangible elements of native culture. For ritual songs once sung become the property of those who first sing them, and may not be repeated by others without due payment.

Structure of songs.

The songs thus sung are all based on the pentatonic scale, but are by no means restricted to it, there being considerable modal variation and a very wide range, both in the character of the songs and in their compass, which sometimes extends (quite apart from the descant frequently sung by the women) to over an octave. Details of their very elaborate structure, together with the native terminology regarding it, will be given in a later volume dealing with music on Atchin, in the language of which island the terms were recorded. As a general description it is enough to say here that each song as a rule begins with a refrain consisting in the Small Islands of the tune sung with a series of nasalised vowels,[1] which is called the "leaf." This is then followed by a verse, sung to the same tune, which is called the "fruit." Verse and refrain then repeat and alternate with one another in patterns differing for the different types of song.[2] Sometimes the leader sings alone, and sometimes the chorus. It is characteristic of all native songs that they always end on a weak note. Accordingly, no song ever ends at the end of a verse, the end coming at the beginning of a repetition of the refrain, which is then cut short by cries of specified types in which leader and chorus usually alternate with one another, and, if the song is accompanied by gongs, by a heightened speed in the rhythm followed by a sudden and dramatic stop.

Great number of songs, and occasions on which sung.

There is an immense number of such songs. There are, to begin with, the ritual cycles connected with all-night dances, during which the same song must not be repeated twice.[3] As each song, together with repeats and intervals, takes on an average not more than ten minutes, this means that at least 70 songs must be sung in a single night. There are several of

[1] In other parts of Malekula, such as South-West Bay, the refrain consists of vowels preceded by the consonants *w* and *l*.

[2] Since I did not make a special study of songs on Vao, those recorded in this volume contain only the verse. Examples from other islands, including the refrain, will be given in later volumes.

[3] Cf. Deacon, 4, p. 363, reporting from Lambumbu that "if possible, a song is not sung twice on the same night."